

Private Members' Business

colleague, the hon. member for Kenora—Rainy River, so properly put it, and I quote from his remarks of the other day:

When you change the mandate and the reason why you came into being, then you create difficulties for the union that is there.

Getting back to the point of essential services, the bill does not elaborate on what are considered essential services. There is a provision in the bill for the corporation and the union to agree to what are essential services but, apart from that, no definition is in place. The legislation would require that the two parties in the dispute would agree on a definition for essential services and would forward a list of those to the minister responsible for the Crown corporation. There the minister can keep tabs on essential services and can even decide, in conjunction with the cabinet, whether a strike is apprehended or in progress and can suspend the right to strike or order essential services to be maintained. Again, for the record, such essential services are not defined in the bill.

• (1310)

Shakespeare so often used the term "That's the rub". The executive powers conferred to ministers of the Crown responsible for particular Crown corporations are very broad. They would be able to order workers back to the job and put a stop to a particular labour force or union which has a legitimate grievance. The section in question, section 90.9 ordering the suspension of the right to strike, goes on to state that this may be done if the essential services provided for are insufficient and that the public health and safety are endangered.

I have two points: first, earlier in the bill the essential services are to be determined by the company and the union or by the union itself. Then we read that the minister responsible may determine the sufficiency of essential services and waive the right to strike. They are very broad powers indeed. Second, the part about public health or public safety being endangered is very unclear. Obviously this would relate to some sort of violence or confrontation, but I fail to understand how the situation of public health or safety would be remedied by ordering

the suspension of the right to strike, thereby aggravating the whole process.

In short, portions of this bill are effective and we can sympathize with the member who has put forward his arguments in Bill C-201. However, still others need further clarification, and therefore it must be referred back to committee for some serious detailed analysis.

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-201, presented by the member for Richelieu. First I would like to make a few comments in regard to the anti-scab part of this bill. That part we support in our party whole-heartedly, because we know what goes on, on the picket line, when a unionized group goes out on strike. We know of the tragedies that happen.

If I may I would like to make reference to one very recent occurrence that is still very vivid in my own mind, what went on in my riding in the town of South Porcupine at Dome Mines, where we saw a very ugly and bitter strike, where we saw life-long friends become enemies, where we saw families being torn apart. Why? It was because there were scabs crossing the picket line. The company saw fit to bring in workers from outside the province to keep the mine going. It said that the miners had to have a mine left over to go to after the strike, so it had to keep the mine going, but it went beyond that. The company went into production. Another atrocity was that it brought in students and used the students as scabs, and some of them were injured.

We know on this same picket line one worker in particular was dragged some 50 feet by a car that decided to drive through the picket line. We know of others who were injured. We also know that there was some bitterness from the union side. It only aggravated the situation. There is a definite need for anti-scab legislation in this country, and I think this is a step in the right direction. I say that with a certain amount of reservation because of the second part of this bill, which I will be speaking on in a few moments.

We have similar legislation in Quebec. It is in the form of anti-scab legislation with a difference. The difference is that in Quebec there is a committee set up to decide